

Slow down and smell the roses

Twenty years ago, an early ad touting the benefits of mobile technology asked “Have you ever sent a fax from the beach? You will.” While it was easy to imagine the potential benefits that mobile technology would bestow, few of us imagined the downside. Today, 24-7 connectivity is changing our lives in many ways, not all of them for the better.

Many now question whether we master technology or it masters us. While it’s added speed and convenience to our lives, it’s not without problems. We’ve become habituated to increasingly short attention spans and multitasking, sometimes to a point of system overload. A recent study showed that people now check their mobile phones more than 150 times a day.

There’s much written about distracted driving but distraction is much more pervasive than that. People devote so much attention to their devices that there are even serious walking-while-texting injuries and deaths that have occurred in the course of taking “selfies.” Are we so busy recording the moment that we forget to fully live it?

In response to the relentless stress and pressure that multitasking and connectivity can impose, there’s a movement to simplify, to slow things down and to pay more attention to living in the moment. Don’t forget, there was life before mobile phones and it was happy and fulfilling. We managed somehow!

Learning to slow things down can take a conscious effort and practice. Here are some “slow tips.”

Practice “mono-tasking.” As much as you can, do one thing at a time and give it your full attention.



Ease into your day. Start with a walk and a nutritious meal. Wait until you get to work to check email.

Savor the moment. Turn off devices during meals and focus on savoring the food, the surroundings and the people you are with.

Master technology. Turn off notifications. Check your phone and retrieve email at set times rather than having it delivered.

Change the pace. Commit to slow, contemplative activities that require a different type of focus: Yoga, reading, chess or meditation.

Go outside. Nature is restorative. Be sure to include outdoor time every week. Smell the roses.

Connect with your senses. Practice paying attention to the detail of the world around you: color, touch, smell and sound can be soothing.

Get active. Add vigorous physical activities like hiking, biking or tennis to your week. Proper exercise, sleep and diet can help improve focus.

Schedule disconnected times. Take occasional vacations or weekends that are device-free.

Log in to www.EducatorsEAP.com for a wide array of exercise and nutrition resources and tips for reducing stress.